SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS AT THE FREEDOM 500 FORUM
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SEC. PERRY: Thank you very much, Jerry. (His ?) job is so exciting that I almost can't stand all the excitement.

I was interested very much in the format of this program. It seems to be based on a popular theory in Washington that reporters are like alligators; you don't have to love them, you don't even have to like them, but you do have to feed them. (Laughter) And this is part of the feeding process.

Five years ago yesterday, the Berlin Wall fell. Neighbors, families, indeed, an entire nation was reunited in that historic development. Today we're seeing history made on another side of the world, on the Korean peninsula. The framework agreement, which was reached in Geneva a few weeks ago, gives hope for the first time in over four decades for ending the confrontation between North and South on that peninsula. Today I'm going to explain my views on why I believe the framework agreement is good for the security of the United States, it's good for the security of Korea, indeed, it's good for the security of the world. And I start off with some discussion of the nature of the threat which caused us to be concerned in the first place, and the history of the negotiations.

For decades, North Korea has been a threat to the peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, and to a greater extent, to the peace and stability in Northeast Asia. This was manifested by their unreasonably large conventional army. For a country that had only 20 million people, they had a million men under arms, and two-thirds of them were based within less than a hundred kilometers of the border between the South and the North. This was the reason for these last number of decades that the United States has maintained military forces with the Republic of Korea; this is the reason why the Republic of Korea has had to maintain such a substantial military force with a forward deployment. And the combination between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea military forces has provided the necessary deterrent through the decades.

A few years ago, a new threat became apparent that we believed would destabilize that deterrent situation, and that was the emergence of a major nuclear weapon program in North Korea. Our concern was particularly heightened 17 months ago when North Korea threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Let me tell you why we were concerned about.

There are some elements of this North Korean program that we do not fully understand, but I'll tell you what we do know and do know with confidence. They have an operational 25-megawatt nuclear reactor which has been generating nuclear fuel, including fuel from which plutonium could be extracted. They had already generated enough spent fuel from that reactor so that that spent fuel, when processed, could provide the makings for perhaps four to five nuclear bombs. They have in addition a 200-megawatt reactor under construction, and a very large reprocessing plant for taking the spent fuel from those reactors and processing it into plutonium which could be used for weapon construction. They had radio chemistry laboratories and high explosive test facilities. The only reasonable explanation for all of these facilities was a nuclear weapons program, and that nuclear weapons program, on top of this million-man conventional force, we considered to pose an unacceptable threat to the stability of peace on the Korean peninsula.

As we saw it then, faced with this threat, we had three options, two of them were very unattractive. The first option was to do nothing, to ignore this, pretend it didn't

exist, hope it would go away. We considered that not tenable because the current danger posed by the million-man force would then be compounded in two to three years when North Korea would be in the position of being able to make perhaps a dozen bombs a year.

A second alternative was to take military action against the reactors, the facility. That obviously risked a large-scale war. So while we never ruled out that alternative, it was clear we had to exhaust all other alternatives before we would consider that one. And so we began 17 months ago on a program of diplomacy to try to persuade North Korea to give up their nuclear program.

Last spring, North Korea, in the midst of these negotiations, began unloading the fuel from the reactor preparatory to processing it to make plutonium. And at that point, we believed that our negotiations had failed. And that point, we shift from what could be called preventive diplomacy to what we called coercive diplomacy, that is diplomacy backed by a threat of military force, and we were prepared then to impose sanctions on North Korea, and were prepared to augment the defenses -- defensive force, the military forces which we had based in the Republic of Korea.

Both of those moves risked -- had a certain risk of war with North Korea and we recognized that risk, but we believed that the alternative of simply letting the program continue was even more dangerous, and so we were prepared to take those risks and announced that we're going to take them. And just at that point, literally just at the point of pulling the trigger, the very day we were prepared to pull the trigger, we heard from North Korea that they were prepared to negotiate an agreement that would terminate their nuclear weapon program. This was the famous Carter message that came back from North Korea. That message came literally the day that we were going to move towards sanctions and to increasing our military forces in the Republic of Korea.

The talks, then, restarted in June and those are the talks that led to the framework agreement which was signed in Geneva a few weeks ago, and I'm going to talk about that agreement today. But I want to point out that while -- that that agreement reached while I was in China on a trip unrelated to the Korean nuclear program, but the Chinese, as well as the United States, have a profound influence in this peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and, therefore, that was a subject of intense interest and intense discussion when I was in China. I was particularly interested in China's view on this because I believe that they are the only country that has any substantial influence on North Korea, and I was -- understood that China is not likely to be taking actions against their own national interests, and I wanted to find out from them firsthand where they saw their national interests lie with regard to the North Korean nuclear weapon program. And they were very clear about it. They did not want North Korea to have a nuclear weapons program and were willing to take actions to prevent that from happening.

Now, their reasons for this were probably very different from ours, but their reasons were simple to explain and simple to understand. They were fearful that, if North Korea got a nuclear weapons program, that the pressure on the other regional nations to move to a nuclear program would become not only hard but maybe unbearable and that they would then see a proliferation of nuclear weapons programs in other regional powers. And they felt that that combination of events would be threatening to them.

Therefore, we had -- we, the United States -- had the same interest in the outcome that China did, which is stopping the nuclear weapon program in North Korea. The first day I was in China it was before the agreement had been reached, and indeed it appeared that the agreements were ready to break down. And the American negotiator, Ambassador Gallucci, had made his last proposal, and that included a requirement that a North-South dialogue be a part of this agreement.

And the North Koreans had turned that down, and we were prepared then to break off the discussions at that point, and that would have taken us back, then, to the sanctions and military -- augmentation of the military forces -- a very dangerous route, but we were prepared again to make that move.

So we -- at this point, when it looked like the talks were going to break down, the North Koreans said that, if we left, if they broke down, which we were prepared to do, that they would immediately start reprocessing -- they would start the reprocessing of the spent fuel to derive the plutonium and they would begin loading -- reloading the reactor with a new load of fuel.

Our negotiator told them that would be a very dangerous move, and when I met with the Chinese, I explained the situation, told them how dangerous the situation was, and asked them to see if they could have a constructive influence on the North Koreans. I do not know what action they took, but I do know that the next day the North Koreans announced that they were accepting the agreement, including the requirement for a North-South dialogue.

Then when we had this agreement, a further discussion with the Chinese was getting them to agree to support the implementation of the agreement, which they did.

This story illustrates what I consider Exhibit A with the proposition that, by talking to each other, by maintaining a dialogue between the U.S. and China, we can advance shared interests. In this case, our interests were the same, which was to stop the North Korean nuclear program.

Now let me turn to this agreement, and I argue that this agreement, although it is not simple to understand, it is an agreement which is good for the security of the Korean Peninsula, for the United States, and for the world.

First of all, it immediately freezes the North Korean nuclear program. It prevents them from restarting the reactor. It blocks the reprocessing of the 8,000 spent fuel rods they have. And it freezes all construction on the

two large reactors which are in the state of construction at Yonbyon. All of that happens immediately.

Secondly, it requires North Korea in time to dismantle the facilities and to give up their fuel rods. I would note that both of those requirements -- the freeze and the dismantlement -- are well beyond any requirements of the NPT or the International Atomic Energy Agency. So what North Korea was agreeing to was well beyond the international agreements which they had made to that point.

Third, they agreed to transparency, which allowed special inspections and allowed continual monitoring by the IAEA to assure compliance.

This agreement solves the nuclear weapon problem in North Korea in the past, in the present, and the future. It has potential other benefits as well. I want to emphasize the word "potential" here, because these are envisioned in the agreement, but not required by the agreement.

By giving the United States and its allies more leverage over North Korea because of what we are supplying, namely oil and, in time, new reactors. The agreement is structured in such a way that none of these benefits accrue to them if they don't follow in a step-by-step basis the requirements of the agreement.

So in short, the way the agreement is structured and the way it is phased, there is no benefit to them from backing out of it. They can do that; at any time they can back out of the agreement, but if they do it, it is phased in such a way that the benefits are not achieved. In a sense, then, nothing in this agreement is left to trust. Because of the requirements for monitoring and because of the way the benefits phase in over time, we have an agreement which can be fully -- in which its compliance we can have great confidence.

Now I want to emphasize this agreement has nothing to do with the conventional threat posed by North Korea, and we are still faced with that conventional threat. We're still faced with the problems we have in North Korea missile technology development and export. We're still faced with a human rights problem in Korea. And therefore, for all of these reasons, understanding that this agreement dealt only with the nuclear problem and not with any of these other problems, the U.S. and the Republic of Korea have agreed on a need for the continued U.S. military presence. We have committed to maintain that presence, and the Republic of Korea has agreed that we should maintain that presence.

(Audio break) -- for opening up North Korea economically. And all of these offer hope for settling broader issues, they offer hope that the agreement may foster dramatic and sweeping changes in North Korea. I want to emphasize this is a hope and this is a potential. The agreement gives us a possibility of achieving that potential, but it does not require it to be achieved, so that is still up to the Koreans, both the North and the South, and the United States, to see if they can realize the potential benefits of the agreement.

I'd like to conclude with a favorite quote of mine from the British novelist Graham Greene, who said "there always comes a moment in time when a door opens and lets the future in." Five years ago, a door opened in Berlin and a new future was opened for the German people. A few weeks ago, a door opened just a crack and raised the possibility of a new future for the people on the Korean peninsula. A future is out there waiting to come in. It's going to require patience and persistence, but we will try to influence that future to make a safer world, in particular to make a safer peninsula, for the children and grandchildren of the people in this room.

I thank you very much. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Thank you very much, Secretary Perry. If you have a little time here -- I know you have a busy schedule -- we have some questions.

Let me remind -- you see there are some questions -- (laughter) -- let me remind you all to please wait for the microphone to come to you and then if you'll say your name and organization it will help all of us get to know each other, which is one of the purposes of this meeting.

Right here. Please, Parker.

Q: I'm Ev Bauman from the newspaper El Universal of Caracas, and if I could change continents for a moment, a month from tomorrow maybe there's another door to open. You've got the Summit of the Americas in Miami, and there's been the hope on the part of the United States of changing, beefing up, the OAS, the Organization of American States, and in that connection there's been a lot of talk from think tanks around town and maybe within the government, too, about the military situation. You have here an inter-American -- what is it called? A security board? Defense board, yes. With military people from all over. It doesn't seem to meet very often. Do you feel that that outfit is a useful -- serves a useful purpose, or should it be changed or eliminated?

SEC. PERRY: Let me start off by noting that I plan to travel to South America next week as a matter of fact. I will be in only two countries on this first visit there. I'll be in Brazil and Argentina. And this reflects my view that we have important security interests in South America and that indeed the nations in the hemisphere have important security -- mutual security interests.

Secondly, we will have a defense representative at the summit meeting in Miami.

And third comment I want to make is that I'm not satisfied with the level of dialogue that institutions available for effecting that security dialogue today. I have suggested that a meeting among the defense ministers in the hemisphere take place early next year for the specific purpose of identifying security issues which we have in common in the hemisphere and exploring ways of working cooperatively to pursue those mutual interests for the common good.

In short, I see the need for a greater emphasis on hemispheric issues, including security issues in the hemisphere.

MODERATOR: Good. Can we come over here to the front side, please? Will you bring the microphone up here?

Q: This is Lee Chong Soo (sp) of Korean Broadcasting System. I have two questions to you. Can you agree the new Republican Congress' request for the increase of defense budget? And the next one is what do you think that the conditions that the U.S. can reduce the military forces in South Korea and the conditions to strengthen the military forces in South Korea? And if North Korea is confirmed that they have already developed nuclear weapons violating the agreement, can you deploy the strategic nuclear weapons to South Korea?

SEC. PERRY: A lot of questions mixed. (Laughter.) In terms of the congressional -- the new Congress and the funding from that new Congress, the Republican -- so-called Republican contract which they made before the election suggested that they were going to increase defense spending. They also suggested they were going to decrease deficit. And when they start putting their programs together to do this, they may -- they'll find some degree of conflict between these two objectives.

I cannot forecast for you how that is going to come out. I will tell you that my planning for the defense budget, which I'll be putting together and the president will be submitting at the end of this year is based on the same assumption of top line, same assumption of resources, that I made before the election.

Now, on the Korean peninsula, the conditions in which we could decrease military forces there -- both Republic of Korea and American forces there -- would be a significant improvement in the political situation, accompanied by a reduction of the size of the North Korean armed forces and the reduction of the forward deployment of those forces. So, there has to be a dramatic and significant change on the ground in North Korea to provide the basis for the reduction of conventional forces in the Republic of Korea. Conditions under which one might increase those forces were the ones I've already described to you. If we saw -- if we were not going to get an agreement, we were prepared to increase the forces. By the same token, if the agreement were to break down, that would provide a rationale for increasing the size of the deployed forces there.

Finally, on the question of nuclear forces, we have thousands of nuclear weapons which are capable of reaching targets anywhere in the world. It is not necessary to deploy nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula in order to have the benefit of deterrents of those systems.

MODERATOR: Okay, could we go over here, please? And we'll come back over here --

Q: My name is Al Murphy from Worldnet TV, USIA-TV. Just want to briefly ask you -- this question is a little different base or focus. I'm working on the "Democracy" series for Francophone Africa, French-speaking Africa, and the topic is the role of the media. And I just wanted to ask you, how important to you is the media, as far as getting your point across or views across to the public?

SEC. PERRY: Today, besides this meeting, I have had one press conference and one interview. So, I suppose about half of my time was spent up -- was spent with these meetings, not to mention the time spent yesterday preparing for them. That is some reflection of the importance that I place to getting my message across. I think that one of the most important functions of the secretary of defense is to use his office as a bully pulpit, as a pulpit from which he can explain what he thinks the security problems are, what he thinks can be done about those problems, and why the program he's formulated is going to achieve those objectives. That is all in the way of building support. Ultimately these programs are approved in the Congress and so a lot of my time is spent also working directly with the Congress, but the Congress in any democratic institution is influenced profoundly by public opinion and therefore I speak directly to the public as well, through the media.

MODERATOR: Could we go over to this side, please?

Q: Mr. Secretary, Abdulsalam Massarueh with Arab American Media service and the Foreign Correspondent Association. Would the recognition of Kuwait's border and sovereignty by Iraq help to contribute towards lifting the sanctions of Iraq? Especially -- this recognition was demanded by United States and its allies for some time. And how would the United States see the future in its relations with Iraq in light of the fact that there is an increased Iranian threat to the Arabian gulf peninsula and to the Middle East? Thank you.

SEC. PERRY: This is a subject which the secretary of state has already spoken on and I can't really add to what he said. Briefly, what he said was that in order to be -- in order to have the sanctions removed that Iraq should comply with all of the United nations resolutions, one of which was the recognition of Kuwait. But there are others as well and in particular there's a very important resolution concerning the weapons of mass destruction, and compliance with the provisions for the removal of weapons of mass destruction, and there's also some resolutions dealing with reparations.

MODERATOR: Let's go right here and then we'll go back in the middle over here, please.

Q: I'm Mr. Bjorn Hansen from the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation and I have a couple of questions to you about the security cooperation within the western European union and the European Union as the framework.

From an American perspective how does this cooperation affect the relationship between Europe and the United States? In other words, will the European part of NATO be more reliable on itself and less on the U.S.? And the next question is tied to the Norwegian referendum on joining the European Union. Will the United States of America prefer Norway, which is the only NATO country bordering Russia, to join the EU from a security point of view?

SEC. PERRY: On the second question, I don't think it's appropriate for me to express an opinion on whether or not Norway joins the European Union.

On the first question, I do have a strong opinion about the Western European Union and its connection with

NATO and its connection with the United States, and that is, we see the Western European Union as the Atlantic pillar of NATO, and to the extent this Atlantic pillar of the Western European nations are able to work together to improve efficiency, for example in arms development and production, that then improves NATO overall and we're happy to see it.

We have, however, taken a strong position that the Western European Union cannot and should not function independently of NATO -- it is an arm of NATO, not an independent activity -- in particular that it is not feasible, from our point of view, for nations to join the Western European Union who were not members of NATO. And the reason for that is that that would be bringing an implicit, maybe even an explicit, security guarantee to them; the guarantor would be the NATO military forces, including American and Canadian military forces; and we would have nothing to say about these nations joining the Western European Union. So we feel strongly that it is an arm of NATO, not something separate and independent of.

MODERATOR: Back over here, please.

Q: Connie Lawn, Audio-Video News. Sir, do you foresee any changes now in the economic or security relationship or assistance, U.S. assistance to Israel and Egypt in light of the new budgetary restrictions and the new Republican Congress?

SEC. PERRY: I can't be very helpful on that question, because at this point I do not have a clear view as to what budgetary strategy the new Congress will have. I'm anxious to get that view, and I will be meeting with the new Republican leadership over the course of the next weeks to find out their views and to find ways of working cooperatively with them.

I will say that the Defense Department has always sought to work in a bipartisan way with the Republican members of our committees, as well as the Democratic members. Indeed, the committees themselves, probably more than other committees in Congress, have worked in a bipartisan way, so that when the chairmen of the Armed Services Committee come to meet with me they typically would bring with them the ranking Republican as well. So I have developed, in my time as secretary and deputy secretary, I've developed very close working relationships with the ranking Republicans as well as the chairmen of our relevant committees.

Q: But do you expect --

MODERATOR: Let's let everybody to have a chance to ask questions, please.

Q: Hi. I'm Ayako Doi with the Japan Digest. Mr. Secretary, my question concerns U.S.-Japan security treaty. There has been some tell-tale signs that the bitter fight over trade with Japan has already somewhat spilled over to the security -- feelings about the security cooperation among the Japanese establishment. How do you see the value of this treaty for the post-Cold-War future, and how do you see the danger of it breaking up?

SEC. PERRY: The security alliance between United States and Japan is alive and well. It is healthy today and it will continue to be healthy, in my opinion.

MODERATOR: Okay. Back in the -- way back in the back, and then we'll come way up here in the front, Parker, if you would.

Q: Mr. Secretary, David Smith, ITN, Channel 4, London. Sir, all the parties to the Middle East peace process now seem to want to see the United States commit troops to the Golan Heights in the event of Syria and Israel finding a compromise. Is there a commitment from your side to do that? What sort of numbers are we talking about? And is it something that you would do unilaterally or that you would feel that you'd have to go to the United Nations on first? Because clearly on a diplomatic level now, the pressure is on, it seems, over the next few months to bring Syria and Israel to an agreement.

SEC. PERRY: Those are matters which the secretary of state will be discussing and negotiating in the weeks ahead. Our role in the Department of Defense will be to provide appropriately trained and equipped troops to back up that commitment if and when it is made. My understanding at this stage is that the United States has agreed to participate in peacekeeping forces in the Golan Heights if the two parties believe that will be a useful and constructive step, but as of this stage, I'm not aware of any agreement that's been made committing any specific number of troops, and we don't have the basis for doing the planning therefor for any specific deployment at this time.

MODERATOR: Let's come up here in the front.

Q: Sir, I'm Haim Shibi from Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel. The Gulf countries are sometimes reluctant to have prepositioning of American equipment on their soil. Would you consider enlargement of prepositioning of American equipment in Israel? And the second question is the future of the Arrow system. Do you favor the continuation of a joint research and production of this anti-ballistic system? Thank you. of this anti-ballistic system? Thank you.

SEC. PERRY: On the Arrow, I favor the continued joint research program on the Arrow. Whether or not there's a joint production program depends on whether there's a production program, and I don't believe the program is far enough advanced for either Israel or the United States to make a confident judgment on that point yet. On the prepositioning of equipment, one of the great lessons from both the Gulf War in the 1990-91 time era and the recent confrontation with Iraq is the great advantage of prepositioning equipment, particularly heavy armored equipment. We had nearly a brigade of armored equipment prepositioned in Kuwait, and of course that was the first force we had deployed and up to the border in a matter of days from the alerting. So, prepositioning equipment is of considerable importance.

One of the conclusions then we came from this last confrontation was that we should increase our commitment to prepositioning, and we're exploring several alternative ways of doing that, including perhaps another brigade or so of armored equipment in other

countries -- and we're looking at three or four different alternatives there -- and of course would have to discuss and get the permission of those countries before we could do that. We're looking into the possibility of more what we call marine-prepositioned deployment, which is putting brigades of armored equipment on ships. We had a brigade of army equipment on ships based at Diego Garcia which were sent to Saudi Arabia, and that equipment has subsequently been joined by forces from the 24th Infantry Division, and they are now exercising in the deserts in Kuwait. So, a strong endorsement of prepositioning, a realization we're going to increase prepositioning, but still open as to the modality of how we're going to that.

MODERATOR: Let's go over on this side, please?

Q: Sujatha Shenoy, the Business Standard, India. Mr. Secretary, have you set your dates for your visit to India? And what would be on your agenda?

SEC. PERRY: Yes, I have set the dates, and it's -- I don't have them precisely in my head, but it's early in January. I think it's the second week in January. And we will be going to develop the -- explore the modalities of security cooperation between India and the United States is the first item on the agenda. Secondly, to discuss ways in which we can cooperate in reducing the dangers of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in southern Asia.

MODERATOR: Right here, please?

Q: A follow-up to that, Secretary Perry. I'm Ela Dutt with India Abroad News Service. Recently, during your visit to China, in one of your speeches you mentioned some kind of a role for China as a sort of viceroy in south Asia. This has raised some concerns in south Asia. There have been some reactions in India to that. I wondered if you could clarify your position on the role you see for China in South Asia.

SEC. PERRY: I'll have to look very carefully at that. The speech that I gave, there was nothing in there which I intended to give the impression that China had any such role in South Asia. The particular relevance of China relative to weapons of mass destruction in China is that India, for example, in any considerations of what its requirements are for nuclear weapons, looks first of all to the west and Pakistan and makes a judgment; it also looks to the north and China and makes a judgment. And therefore, any consideration of how to reduce the development of nuclear weapons in that area needs to be regional, to consider all three of these nations at once.

I believe that's -- I would believe that that would be the judgment of the Indian government, too, and I'll find that out when I speak with them. But I do not see China as having any viceroy role or any other dominant role in the considerations of the -- geopolitical considerations in southern Asia.

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary, time for a couple more?

SEC. PERRY: Two more.

MODERATOR: Okay. Right here, please, and then we'll go way back in the back, Parker. We'll wind up in the back.

Q: Dr. Perry, this is Jong Kim of Pusan Daily News, Korea. Can you comment about the pulling out of a Chinese delegation from the armistice committee in DMZ? Will it affect the current status of agreement?

SEC. PERRY: (Pauses.) No, I can't comment on that. I don't know what was behind that move and I cannot make an informed comment on it. Sorry.

Q: Krystyna Stachowiak from the Warsaw Voice, I'm with the Polish press corps. Mr. Secretary, a couple of weeks ago the Clinton administration hinted it may be in favor of a quicker admission into NATO for four Eastern European countries or Central European countries, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It prompted a response from the Russian foreign minister, who said that quicker admission or an extension of NATO would definitely destabilize situation in Europe. Does the Russian position influence in any way the U.S. position on the issue?

SEC. PERRY: The U.S. position relative to expansion of NATO will be elaborated in considerable detail in a few weeks at the NATO foreign ministers meeting. Secretary Christopher is prepared to do that, and I will further elaborate it at the NATO defense ministers meeting, which occurs, I think it's November the 15th -- pardon me, December the 15th.

So, that's going to be all laid out there. The U.S. position is important as one of the important contributors to what the NATO position is going to be, but we're seeking to get a NATO position on that question. What we will be advancing is the idea that next year, 1995, is the year for evaluating the process by which NATO expansion would take place, not the year for looking at who or when. And I mention that point because membership in NATO, it's not like joining a club. It has -- there's a two-sided responsibility, and the nations that want to join NATO have to bring something to that partnership as well as get something from it. And we think it is important to lay out carefully what those requirements are and how we can unfold the process which will lead to an expansion in NATO. We do not see that expansion happening next year or even a concrete determination of which nations are going to be -- are going to expand. We do see the expansion of NATO as not only inevitable but a desirable consequence. But it is very important to work it out, the timing of it and modality of it, very carefully. And that process will be under way -- begin under way next year if the NATO accepts the proposals we will be making at the two ministers' meetings.

MODERATOR: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you, Jerry. (Applause.)

MODERATOR: Good to have you here, sir.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. On behalf of the Freedom Forum and the Center for Foreign Journalists and all of your colleagues here, we appreciate it.

If all of you would remain seated while the secretary and his team get back to work, it's very important to those -- the minority of those here who are Americans -- it's very important because of the size of the budget at the department that he gets back to work as soon as possible. (Laughter.)

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